

EDITORIAL

Editorial articles do not necessarily
reflect or represent the views of
The Portland Observer

Attention Readers!

Please take a minute to send us your comments. We're always trying to give you a better paper and we can't do it without your help. Tell us what you like and what needs improvement... any suggestions are welcomed and appreciated. We take criticism well! Get your powerful pens out NOW and address your letters to: Editor, Reader Response, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680) Established in 1970

Charles Washington
Publisher & Editor

Mark Washington
Distribution Manager

Gary Ann Taylor
Business Manager

Paul Neufeldt
Production & Design

Danny Bell
Advertising Sales Manager

Tony Washington
Arts & Entertainment

Gary Washington
Public Relations

Audrey Washington
Business Assistant

Contributing Writers:

Professor McKinley Burt, Lee Perlman,
Neal Heilpern, Eugene Rashad

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, Oregon 97211
503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015
Email: Pdxobserv@aol.com

Deadline for all submitted materials:

Articles: Friday, 5:00 pm Ads: Monday, 12:00pm

POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes To: Portland Observer,
P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, Oregon.
Subscriptions: \$30.00 per year

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association • Serving Portland and Vancouver.

SUBSCRIBE TO The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer can be sent directly to your home for only \$30.00 per year. Please fill out, enclose check or money order, and mail to:

SUBSCRIPTIONS

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER; PO Box 3137
PORTLAND, OREGON 97208

Name:

Address:

City, State:

Zip-Code:

THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Overcoming Racism In America

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

As we approach the 21st century the fundamental challenge to our nation remains the same as it was at the end of the 18th century: the problem of racism.

Racism is not easily eradicated from America because it is such an integral part of the American experience. Slavery was the economic backbone of the original thirteen colonies, and the idea that an African American counted as only 3/5ths of a person was institutionalized in the Constitution.

Certainly, the character of American racism has changed over the past two hundred and twenty years. African Americans are now legally entitled to all the rights of full citizenship. Though this enfranchisement has not been powerful enough to overcome the social and economic obstacles to full equality. Can racism ever be overcome?

Not in America as we have known it. As long as power in America is concentrated in the institutions that pre-date the abolition of slavery then racism will never be overcome. Reforms, concessions, increased tolerance, yes, we have won these things. But racism has not been overcome.

The Republican Party ended slavery. One hundred years later, the Democratic Party put itself at the head of our civil rights movement. But in neither case were African Americans full partners in building a new America. We wrenched our freedom and dignity from a basically white power structure that was more or less disposed - at that particular time in history - to accommodate our demands. The major parties enlarged American democracy to "include"

us and other "disadvantaged" constituencies not as partners, but as purely passive voting (or non-voting) blocs.

The politic of coming to white America to get things for Black America has failed, and will continue to fail. This approach locks us into the politics of identity victim. We have to reach out to other Americans willing to work with us as full partners and build a new American democracy.

A new democracy means increased citizen participation where all Americans are activists, and take responsibility for the country. It means restructuring the decision-making process to give all citizens a stronger voice, using technology to update the electoral process and make it more accessible. And enacting term limits to eliminate "professional politicians." It means getting the two parties out of over-controlling America; it means depoliticizing government, our economy and our culture. It means completely overhauling our election laws so that we have truly free elections that are not determined by special interests and providing equitable access to mass communications and debates.

Building a new American democracy requires that Black and white Americans engage in a new kind of activity together. We have complex and diverse feelings about one another. But I think it's very clear that there isn't a shared commonality of interest, of collective ownership of the country. Two hundred and twenty years of struggle within this unequal partnership yielded toleration, but not cooperation. The way to create cooperation is to build something together.

Perhaps the greatest paradox in the current scandal about foreign influence-peddling in D.C. is that the biggest foreign influence-peddler of all is leading the charge against the Clinton Administration. We speak here, of course, about the Washington Times, the Moonie rag.

The Washington Times is Rev. Moon's pet project, his attempt to bend the course of American public policy to the right. He has spent literally millions and millions of dollars trying to pin scandals on various Democratic leaders, defame liberals, puff up right-wing ideologies, and lend credence to numerous far-right conspiracy theories.

To a great extent, he has succeeded. He has launched a whole series of them into "talking head"

Many Alleged Army Rapes Just That, Alleged!

NAACP President Kwesi Mfumu staged a precedent shattering news conference Tuesday, March 11, presenting a representative group of five white female soldiers who promptly shocked the nation by recanting previous testimony that they had been raped by African American Training personnel.

"We were coerced into making false statements...I agreed to tell them what they wanted to hear in order for them to leave me alone... I never admitted that I was raped, but I was told that under military law consensual sex was considered rape... They are not allowing me to speak what I feel because they are afraid it would help defense... everything they said was a lie."

Such blatant and perverted obstruction of the criminal justice system is a felony (to "suborn... inducing a witness to commit perjury"). However, "this is the army" as the old maxim goes, and by their very nature military institutions have never been noted for any departure from the most rigid codes of justice (or injustice). The case will be made that the military could not operate in

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Influence Peddling

status on TV. He has helped drive the Washington Post to the right, to the point where the Post's once-liberal reputation is now almost completely at odds with its conservatively-slanted opinion page. He has used his money (foreign money!) to purchase credibility in conservative ranks, despite what should be their uneasiness about his weird marriage

theories, and his even weirder belief that he ranks up there with Jesus!

Rev. Moon is a prophet in his own mind--a position which we would think should make most conservatives shun him, rather than embrace him. Meanwhile, the foreign-funded Moonie Times is leading the attack on Bill Clinton for foreign money laundering! Only in America...

any other fashion, but that, of course, does not appear on any recruiting posters.

Although the NAACP press conference was held just outside the Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland where over 50 women recruits have made official complaints of sexual abuse against one officer and about 20 drill sergeants, the nation's media appears to have uncovered a scandal at any installation large enough to support a post exchange. But those suspicious of the entire process like Hollywood's mercilessly intimidating and demeaning helpless young whites. That created a lot of resentment, but who cared? It made a lot of money.

Now, this last observation brings us around to another time-tested maxim, one I frequently use in this column, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Could have, should have this sorry state of affairs been anticipated? My correspondents tell me that there have been mumbblings and rumbblings on the bases for the past three years. It is also said that the

Pentagon, eager to retain its widely-advertised 'success story' of friction-free integration, deliberately ignored the many danger signs that should have forewarned of disaster at hand.

Typically, these would have ranged from a pronounced increase in racist graffiti on the walls of latrines and recreation areas to the appearance of vitriolic right-wing hate publications that were printed either on or off the base. And I am told that accompanying these rather overt manifestations of a degenerating racial climate are the more subtle indications of discontent, childish pushing and shoving in lines for food and other services, racial epithets yelled out in darkened theatres.

It is interesting that Togo West, the African American Secretary of the Army -- described by some of the black media as the least effectual of all the administration appointees in terms of being the expected ombudsman in achieving and maintaining an ethnic equity in his realm -- suddenly and loudly called for an "internal investi-

gation by the army, not by outsiders."

Contrariwise, William Coffey, the Secretary of Defence, very sensibly calls for an "immediate independent investigation." It is well understood by any thinking person that it is critical to restore the highest level of credibility to the legal and civil procedures involved here. The nation has not come as far as it could have in matters of race and discrimination, but, certainly, this is no time to regress.

It has occurred to quite a few that there are some significant economic factors at work here. We have discussed in this column the fact that there has been an increasing degree of jealousy and envy of African Americans in the public sector of the workplace. For decades racism kept them out of the more lucrative positions in business, industry and the craft and trades, so blacks gravitated to the civil service and the armed forces for job opportunities.

The net result is that in today's unsettled economic climate of layoffs, mergers and outsourcing many blacks are in the enviable position of having relatively secure job and pension security via civil service. It was time to win one.

By Professor McKinley Burt

Legistator in progress

To The Editor

The 1997 Oregon Legislature is now in progress. Thousands of ideas and proposals are being discussed at the state capitol and many will be passed into law.

The bill most important to every property owner is HB 2515. This is the landowner notification bill. Cur-

rently, a citizen can buy a home or a piece of property under one set of zoning laws and the government can change those laws without notifying the property owner that a change has been made.

For many years, landowners have complained that the state's land-use agency is unfair. It is wrong when

rules are proposed and put into law which restrict the use of private property without informing the property owners prior to the change. In many instances, landowners have been totally left out of the land-use process. Citizens may not learn until years after laws have changed that they cannot use their property for its

intended purpose.

The state land-use system has made a serious error by not including landowners in the process. HB 2515 is the first step to return needed balance to Oregon's problem plagued land-use system and to bring landowners back into the process.

Sincerely, Joan McConoughey

Imbalanced Constitutional Budget Amendment

BY CONGRESSMAN JESSE L. JACKSON, JR.

The federal government should balance its budget like families, businesses and states do!

But since it does not, we need a Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment to guarantee that the federal government will balance its budget. That is the essence of the argument for the amendment.

The amendment may sound good on its face, but it falls flat on its face when examined more critically.

A federal Balanced Budget Amendment (BBA) would: damage our economy by making recessions deeper and more frequent; heighten the risk of default and jeopardize the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government; weaken the principle of majority rule; lead to reductions in needed investments for the future; favor wealthy Americans over middle-and-low-income Americans by making it harder to raise revenues and easier to cut programs; would likely lead to cuts in Social Security checks, but more importantly affect Social Security's financing; not be the same as state balanced budget mandates; not be nec-

essary because we are making progress on reducing the debt without it; and, therefore, passing the BBA is not a prudent path for the nation to follow.

The rigid fiscal policy prescription of the BBA proposed by both the House and the Senate would require the budget to be balanced (or in surplus) every year, regardless of whether economic growth is strong or weak. A sluggish economy, with fewer incoming revenues and more outgoing expenditures, would create a deficit that needs economic stimulation to reverse the cycle. Under a BBA, more deficit reduction would be required in periods of slow growth than in times of rapid growth -- precisely the opposite of what is needed. Thus, a constitutional amendment risks making recessions more frequent and deeper.

Under the BBA, the government could no longer borrow funds unless there was a three-fifths vote in both houses of Congress to raise the debt limit. Under that scenario, a budget crisis, where a default is threatened, is more likely, and it would heighten the risk that such a default would actually occur. A default of only a few days could have long-term im-

plications. It would erode confidence in the binding nature of U.S. financial obligations. The government pays relatively low interest rates on its loans because it pays its debts back in full and on time. A default would shake that confidence and, therefore, raise interest rates and government costs paid by taxpayers.

The requirement that the budget must be balanced at all times unless three-fifths of the members of Congress agree to raise the debt ceiling, also weakens the current principle of majority rule. It would empower a minority (40 percent, plus one), willing to threaten economic turmoil and disruption unless they get their way, with the ability to extort concessions or exercise unprecedented leverage over our national economic and fiscal policy.

Public investment that improves long-term productivity growth -- such as investments in education, infrastructure, research and development -- encourages increased private-sector investment that results from lower deficits. A BBA, requiring a balanced budget that did not borrow to modernize could not remain competitive. Most families, if they could not borrow, could not

purchase homes or finance college educations. State and local governments borrow judiciously to finance road construction, to build new schools and to make other capital improvements, thus assuring their future economic development.

The BBA, while formally flexible in approach to deficit reduction, favors wealthy Americans over middle-and-lower-income Americans because, under current law, legislation can pass by a majority of those present and voting by recorded or vice vote. The BBA, however, requires that legislation raising taxes be approved on a roll call vote by a majority of the full membership of both houses.

Thus, the BBA would make it harder to cut the deficit by curbing the special interest tax breaks of the oil and gas industries, and easier to reduce such programs as Medicare, veterans' benefits, education, environmental programs and assistance for poor children. Wealthy individuals and corporations receive most their government benefits in the form of tax entitlements (more than \$400 billion in 1995), while low-and-middle-income Americans receive most of their government benefits through programs.



Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208